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Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 0808

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, GH
SUBJ: NEW POLITICAL MOVEMENT OPPOSES UNION GOVERNMENT

REF: ACCRA 0641

SUMMARY. EMBASSY HAS OBTAINED COPIES OF TWO HANDOUTS DISTRIBUTED AT JANUARY 27 INAUGURATION OF A NEW POLITICAL ORGANIZATION WHICH GROUP OF WELL-KNOWN, OLD-LINE POLITICIANS HAVE FORMED TO OPPOSE HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG AND HIS PROPOSED UNION GOVERNMENT. THIS GROUP, PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE, PLANS TO URGE PUBLIC TO VOTE "NO" ON UNION GOVERNMENT IN MARCH 30 REFERENDUM. IT REPRESENTS FIRST SERIOUS BID BY ANTI-ACHEAMPONG FORCES TO HALT BANDWAGON MOMENTUM TOWARD UNION GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FIRST HANDOUT IS A 10-PAGE STATEMENT BY RETIRED LT. GENERAL A.A. AFRIFA, CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL LIBERATION COUNCIL WHICH OVERTHREW NKRUMAH IN 1966. IN IT, AFRIFA CHARGES THAT "INSTEAD OF FINDING INTELLIGENT SOLUTIONS TO (GHANA'S) GROWING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THE MORAL DEPRAVITY AND ANARCHY FACING US, (THE ACHEAMPONG GOVERNMENT) APPEARS TO BE SEEKING REFUGE. . . IN NECROMANCY,
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PHONE SPIRTUALISM AND WHITE WITCHCRAFT. . . AND IN A DUBIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENT, NAMELY, UNION GOVERNMENT." AFRIFA THEN ADVANCES 10 ARGUMENTS WHY GHANAIANS SHOULD REJECT UNION GOVERNMENT -- E.G., IT WOULD BE AT VARIANCE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS, COULD LEAD THE NATION INTO DICTATORSHIP, MAKE A MOCKERY OF FREE ELECTIONS, SADDLE GHANA WITH AN INEFFECTIVE PARLIA-

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MENT, AND WOULD NOT DESPITE ACHEAMPONG'S CLAIMS) ELIMINATE POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND DISUNITY. AFRIFA DECLARES NEW MOVEMENT INTENDS "TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN" AND CALLS ON RULING SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL (SMC) TO ALLOW IT TO ORGANIZE AND HOLD RALLIES. SHOULD THE REFERENDUM RETURN A "NO" VOTE ON UNION GOVERNMENT, HE CONCLUDES, "WE WOULD SPEAK FOR THE NATION AND CALL ON THE SMC GOVERNMENT TO RESIGN FORTHWITH AND HAND OVER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COUNTRY TO AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD SPEAK FOR THE NATION AND CALL ON THE SMC GOVERNMENT TO RESIGN FORTHWITH AND HAND OVER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COUNTRY TO AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD SEE TO THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SMOOTH TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN AND DEMOCRATIC RULE."

2. SECOND HANDOUT IS THREE-PAGE STATEMENT TO PRESS BY K.A. GBEDEMAH, MINISTER OF FINANCE IN NKRUMAH REGIME AND FORMERLY ONE OF AFRIFA'S CHIEF POLITICAL OPPONENTS. IT MAKES MANY OF ABOVE POINTS BUT ALSO STRESSES "WE WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE REFERENDUM AND WE EXPECT THE SMC GOVERNMENT AND ITS ASSOCIATED BODIES PRESENTLY CAMPAIGNING FOR SUPPORT FOR THE UNION GOVERNMENT IDEA TO DO THE SAME. . . WE DO NOT EXPECT HOSTILE OR SELF-APPOINTED THUGS TO COME AND DISRUPT OUR MEETINGS. . ." GBEDEMAH STATES THAT SHOULD REF-
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ERENDUM GO AGAINST UNION GOVERNMENT, VOTE "MUST BE ACCEPTED BY THE SMC GOVERNMENT AS THE EXPRESSION OF THE PEOPLE'S LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THEM TO CARRY ON MANAGING THE AFFAIRS OF OUR COUNTRY," IN WHICH CASE THEY MUST "HAND OVER TO AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT TO ARRANGE THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE."

3. COMMENT: A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF PRO-ACHEAMPONG, PRO-UNION GOVERNMENT GROUPS HAVE SPRUNG UP LATELY, BUT PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE REPRESENTS FIRST SERIOUS BID BY ANTI-ACHEAMPONG FORCES TO CHALLENGE UNION GOVERNMENT FORMALLY IN MARCH 30 REFERENDUM. EMBASSY SOURCES INDICATE THAT IN ADDITION TO AFRIFA AND GBEDEMAH, LEADERS OF NEW GROUP INCLUDE GODFREY W. AMARTEIFIO (PUBLIC RELATIONS MAN AND NOTED BOXING REFEREE); WILLIAM OFFORI-ATTA (FOREIGN MINISTER UNDER BUSIA); JOHNNY HANSON (FORMER HEAD OF PEOPLE'S PARTY); AND F.A. JANTUAH (MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE UNDER NKRUMAH).

4. IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHETHER PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT WILL SUCCEED IN PERSUADING SIGNIFICANT NUM-

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BERS OF VOTERS TO VOTE "NO" ON UNION GOVERNMENT OR, INDEED, WHETHER ACHEAMPONG WILL PERMIT IT TO FUNCTION AND PUBLICIZE ITS VIEWPOINTS. WHILE IT STILL SEEMS MOST LIKELY REFERENDUM WILL RESULT IN ENDORSEMENT OF UNION GOVERNMENT, EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT ACHEAMPONG HIMSELF, HIS SMC COLLEAGUES AND HIS CONCEPT OF UNION GOVERNMENT REMAIN RELATIVELY UNIPOPULAR. MOMENTUM OF UNION GOVERNMENT BANDWAGON THUS FAR HAS BEEN DUE LARGELY TO LACK OF ALTERNATIVES, DISUNITY AMONG OPPOSITION FORCES, WIDESPREAD APATHY AND ACHEAMPONG'S ALMOST TOTAL DOMINANCE OF MEDIA. CONCEIVABLY, PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT COULD BECOME A MAGNET FOR PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER ANTI-UNION GOVERNMENT FORCES, BUT ACHEAMPONG STILL HOLDS VIRTUALLY ALL THE GOOD
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CARDS -- SUPPORT FROM MILITARY, POLICE, TRADE UNIONS, MOST POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND MOST CHIEFS. PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT THUS FACES AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT UP-HILL FIGHT BETWEEN NOW AND END OF MARCH.

5. AFRIFA'S CRYPTIC REFERENCE TO "WHITE WITHCRAFT" ALMOST CERTAINLY REFERS TO RECENT ACTIVITIES HERE OF AMCIT MRS. CLARE PROPHET, A PASADENA SPIRITUALIST WHO HAS BEEN TRYING TO ASSOCIATE GOD WITH UNION GOVERNMENT. IN ONE NOTEWORTHY EXAMPLE, SHE PUBLICLY INVOKED THE TRINITY, LIKENING GHANA'S MILITARY TO THE FATHER, PROFESSIONALS TO THE SONE AND LABORERS TO THE HOLY GHOST. GHANA IS IN MANY RESPECTS A DEVOUT COUNTRY BUT MANY FELT THIS WAS GOING TOO FAR, AND HER OBVIOUS SPONSORSHIP HERE BY THE SMC MAY HAVE BACKFIRED. SMITH

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